

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216

(202) 225-6906
judiciary.house.gov

August 3, 2023

Mr. Imran Ahmed
Chief Executive Officer
Center for Countering Digital Hate
1250 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Mr. Ahmed:

The Committee on the Judiciary is conducting oversight of how and to what extent the Executive Branch has coerced and colluded with companies and other intermediaries to censor speech.¹ Certain third parties, including organizations like yours, appear to have played a role in this censorship regime by advising the government and social media companies on so-called “misinformation” and other types of content—sometimes with direct or indirect support or approval from the federal government.² Whether directly or indirectly, a government-approved or -facilitated censorship regime is a grave threat to the First Amendment and Americans’ civil liberties. Accordingly, as part of the Committee’s constitutional oversight obligations, we write to request relevant information and documents.

We are interested in understanding the interactions between the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) and the federal government in particular, as well as between CCDH and social media companies. CCDH claims that “social media companies erode basic human rights and civil liberties by enabling the spread of online hate and disinformation.”³ According to its website, “CCDH holds [the social media companies] accountable and responsible for their business choices by . . . advocating change from platforms and governments to protect our communities.”⁴ The Biden White House relied on CCDH’s report titled “The Disinformation Dozen,” in its unconstitutional pressure campaign against social media platforms⁵ to censor

¹ See Ryan Tracy, *Facebook Bowed to White House Pressure, Removed Covid Posts*, WALL ST. J. (July 28, 2023); Rep. Jim Jordan (@Jim_Jordan), TWITTER (July 27, 2023, 12:03 PM), https://twitter.com/Jim_Jordan/status/1684595375875760128.

² See Tracy, *supra* note 1; Rep. Jim Jordan (@Jim_Jordan), TWITTER (July 28, 2023, 12:03 PM), https://twitter.com/Jim_Jordan/status/1684957660515328001; see also Donie O’Sullivan, *White House turns up heat on Big Tech’s Covid ‘disinformation dozen’*, CNN (July 16, 2021).

³ *About*, CTR. FOR COUNTERING DIGITAL HATE, <https://counterhate.com/about/> (last visited July 24, 2023).

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See, e.g., O’Sullivan, *supra* note 2.

those, including Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who CCDH maligned as “anti-vaxxers . . . responsible for almost two-thirds of anti-vaccine content circulating on social media platforms.”⁶

To assist the Committee in its oversight, we ask that you please provide the following documents and information:

1. All documents and communications, from January 1, 2015 to the present, between or among any employee, contractor, or agent of your organization and the Executive Branch of the United States Government referring or relating to the moderation, deletion, suppression, restriction, demonetization, or reduced circulation of content; the accuracy or truth of content; or the attribution of content to the source or participant in a foreign malign or state-sponsored influence operation.
2. All documents and communications, from January 1, 2015 to the present, between or among any employee, contractor, or agent of your organization and any technology company, including social media companies, referring or relating to the moderation, deletion, suppression, restriction, demonetization, or reduced circulation of content; the accuracy or truth of content; or the attribution of content to the source or participant in a foreign malign or state-sponsored influence operation.
3. A list of employees, contractors, or agents of your organization, along with their current and prior titles, who, from January 1, 2015 to the present, have communicated with the Executive Branch of the United States Government regarding the moderation, deletion, suppression, restriction, demonetization, or reduced circulation of content; the accuracy or truth of content; or the attribution of content to the source or participant in a foreign malign or state-sponsored influence operation.
4. A list of employees, contractors, or agents for your organization, along with their current and prior titles, who, from January 1, 2015 to the present, have communicated with any technology company, including social media companies, regarding the moderation, deletion, suppression, restriction, demonetization, or reduced circulation of content; the accuracy or truth of content; or the attribution of content to the source or participant in a foreign malign or state-sponsored influence operation.
5. A list of all grants, contracts, or any funds received, from January 1, 2015 to the present, from the United States Government, as well as any underlying documentation that reflects those grants, contracts, or funds, relating in any way to your organization’s efforts concerning the moderation, deletion, suppression, restriction, demonetization, or reduced circulation of content; the accuracy or truth of content; or the attribution of content to the source or participant in a foreign malign or state-sponsored influence operation.

⁶ *The Disinformation Dozen: Why platforms must act on twelve leading online anti-vaxxers*, CTR. FOR COUNTERING DIGITAL HATE, <https://counterhate.com/research/the-disinformation-dozen/> (last visited July 24, 2023).

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Please produce all documents and information as soon as possible but no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 17, 2023. In addition, please treat these discovery obligations as ongoing and applicable to any information generated after receipt of this letter.

Furthermore, this letter serves as a formal request to preserve all existing and future records and materials relating to the topics addressed in this letter. You should construe this preservation notice as an instruction to take all reasonable steps to prevent the destruction or alteration, whether intentionally or negligently, of all documents, communications, and other information, including electronic information and metadata, that are or may be responsive to this congressional inquiry. This instruction includes all electronic messages sent using your official and personal accounts or devices, including records created using text messages, phone-based message applications, or encryption software.

Pursuant to the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee on the Judiciary has jurisdiction to conduct oversight of matters concerning “civil liberties” to inform potential legislative reforms.⁷ In addition, H. Res. 12 authorized the Committee’s Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government to investigate “issues related to the violation of the civil liberties of citizens of the United States.”⁸

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-6906. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jim Jordan
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Jerrold L. Nadler, Ranking Member

⁷ Rules of the House of Representatives R. X (2023).

⁸ H. Res. 12 § 1(b)(1).